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PAN-AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE

ANNCR:

FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY WILL BEGIN MEETING IN KHARTOUM JULY SEVENTH TO PREPARE FOR THAT BODY'S FIFTEENTH ANNUAL SUMMIT. A CENTRAL TOPIC IS EXPECTED TO BE THE REBEL ATTACK ON ZAIRE'S SOUTHERN PROVINCE OF SHABA, AND THE PRESENCE THERE NOW OF SEVERAL MILITARY CONTINGENTS FROM OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THIS, AMID SUGGESTIONS THAT THE CONTINENT NEEDS A PAN-AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE TO ACT AS A FIRE BRIGADE FOR INTRA-AFRICAN CONFLICTS. V.O.A. WEST AFRICA CORRESPONDENT, JOHN ROBERTS PREPARED THIS REPORT ON THE BACKGROUND AND PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROPOSAL.

VOICE:

THE IDEA OF A PAN-AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE IS AN OLD ONE DATING BACK TO THE EARLY NINETEEN SIXTIES WHEN THE WINDS OF CHANGE WERE BLOWING ACROSS AFRICA BRINGING INDEPENDENCE TO MANY COUNTRIES. GHANA'S KWAME NKRUMAH, WHO LED A GROUP OF LEFTIST-LOOKING COUNTRIES, KNOWN AS THE CASABLANCA GROUP, PRESSED FOR WHAT HE CALLED AN AFRICAN HIGH COMMAND AS PART OF HIS VISION OF A UNION OF AFRICAN STATES. THIS WAS OPPOSED BY MORE CONSERVATIVE AFRICAN NATIONS WHICH WERE AGAINST THE SURRENDER OF ANY SOVEREIGNTY TO A HIGHER AUTHORITY.

AFTER THAT, THE IDEA OF A PAN-AFRICAN PEACE FORCE NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND, DUE IN PART TO THE DIFFICULTY OF ACHIEVING A POLITICAL CONSENSUS ABOUT ITS COMPOSITION AND ALSO THE PROBLEM OF STANDARDIZING MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

THE PROPOSAL ENJOYED A BRIEF COMEBACK WHEN RHODESIA UNILATERALLY DECLARED ITSELF INDEPENDENT, AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES WANTED TO TAKE COLLECTIVE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST PRIME MINISTER IAN SMITH. BUT THIS, TOO, DIED SHORTLY AFTERWARD.

TODAY, IT'S THE CONSERVATIVE AFRICAN STATES WHICH ARE REVIVING THE NOTION OF A PAN-AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE FOLLOWING RECENT LARGE-SCALE CUBAN AND SOVIET INVOLVEMENT ON THE CONTINENT, CHIEFLY IN ANGOLA AND IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. SENEGAL'S PRESIDENT LEOPOLD SENGHOR RAISED THE IDEA AT THE RECENT FRANCO-AFRICAN SUMMIT IN PARIS, JUST AS KATANGUESE REBELS -- TRAINED AND ARMED BY CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION -- AGAIN CROSSED ZAIRE'S SOUTHERN BORDER AND ATTACKED SHABA PROVINCE. THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED THE STRONG BACKING OF THE IVORY COAST, GABON, TOGO, AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE. BUT A CONSENSUS WAS NOT ACHIEVED AMID EXPRESSIONS OF DOUBT BY OTHER FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES SUCH AS NIGER, MALI, UPPER VOLTA -- AND AN OUTRIGHT REJECTION BY BENIN. DESPITE THE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM IN PARIS, SEVERAL FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICAN STATES WENT AHEAD AND SENT SMALL MILITARY CONTINGENTS TO ZAIRE.

OPPONENTS OF A PAN-AFRICAN FORCE TO COUNTER FOREIGN INTERVENTION ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THE IDEA APPEARED TO BE FRENCH-INSPIRED AND SUPPORTED BY AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE DEFENSE PACTS WITH FRANCE. THERE IS ALSO A DEEP SUSPICION, RECENTLY VOICED BY TANZANIA'S PRESIDENT JULIUS NYERERE, THAT SUCH FORCE IS AIMED AT PROTECTING THE WEST'S MINERAL INTERESTS IN AFRICA. NIGERIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, BRIGADIER JOSEPH GARBA, SAID RECENTLY THAT THE PROPOSAL FOR SUCH A FORCE DOES NOT COMMAND ANY SERIOUS SUPPORT IN AFRICAN CIRCLES. AND IN ANY CASE, HE ECHOED THE WIDESPREAD VIEW THAT ANY SUCH FORCE SHOULD BE SET UP UNDER THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY. BRIGADIER GARBA SAID NO FOREIGN TROOPS -- BE THEY CUBAN, FRENCH, OR BRITISH -- HAVE ANY BUSINESS BEING IN AFRICA.

THE INCOMING CHAIRMAN OF THE O.A.U., SUDAN'S PRESIDENT JA'FAR NUMAYRI, SAID RECENTLY THAT ALL FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES

IN AFRICA SHOULD WITHDRAW, AND THAT IF THE O.A.U. HAS ANY ROLE IN THE MATTER, IT IS TO STAND FIRM ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES ON AFRICAN SOIL ARE N O T ACCEPTABLE. AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE O.A.U. WILLIAM ETEKI MBOOMOUA, LOOKING TOWARD THE KHARTOUM SUMMIT, SAID THE ORGANIZATION IS NOW DIVIDED ON THE ISSUE. BUT HE SAID THE O.A.U. MUST MAKE AN EFFORT TO COUNTER WHAT HE CALLED TENDENCIES TOWARD DESTABILIZATION IN AFRICA, WHICH, HE SAID, COULD GRAVELY COMPROMISE AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE ITSELF.

PCA/ GH